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Book Section

Stansfield Turner And the Secrets Of the CIA

SECRECY AND DEMOCRACY
The CIA in Transition
By Stansfield Turner
Houghton Mifflin. 304 pp. $16.95

By James Bamford

HIGH OVER the North Atlantic the Machmeter on the forward bulkhead registered nearly twice the speed of sound. Four hours earlier Admiral Stansfield Turner, commander of NATO's southern flank , had received a "secure" telephone call in his Naples headquarters from the secretary of defense. "The president," said the secretary, "would like to see you in Washington tomorrow." Now, cushioned in a brown leather seat on the Concorde, Admiral Turner could feel his adrenalin begin to race with the Mach numbers as he pondered his future and the meaning of the sudden call.


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Stansfield Turner

A Rhodes scholar out of Annapolis, protégé of progressive Navy chief Elmo Zumwalt, and four stars on each shoulder by his 52nd birthday, he was one of the Navy's best and brightest. On top of that, Jimmy Carter, the new president, had been a classmate at the Naval Academy. There were few places for the ambitious young admiral to go besides the chief of naval operations or chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, or so he hoped. But a few minutes before noon on February 3, 1977, Admiral Turner's optimism decelerated like the Concorde approaching Dulles. "Stan, I'm considering you for Director of Central Intelligence," the president told him. A few hours later he called his wife to give her the disappointing news: "Darling, we're going to the bush leagues."

Secrecy and Democracy might have been subtitled "The Education of a CIA Director." It is a surprisingly candid account of Admiral Turner's four reluctant years at the top of America's expanding intelligence bureaucracy. That it is not even more candid, however, is not the fault of the former DCI. Like the hunter who stumbles into his own bear trap, Admiral Turner complains bitterly about the way he was treated by the CIA prepublication censors who shredded more than 100 passages from his manuscript. As he points out with some irony, it was he who in 1978 urged prosecution of former employe Frank Snepp for failure to submit his manuscript to the censors. Snepp was sued by the agency and forced to forfeit all monies received from his book, *Decent Interval*.

"I fully support the requirement for such review," Turner writes. "What I object to is the way the present administration conducts its reviews." Chief among his complaints was the "extreme arbitrariness" of the review. "The deletions ranged from borderline issues to the ridiculous." In the latter category was an apparent requirement to delete the name of the British foreign intelligence organization, MI-6, even though this has been openly acknowledged for many decades on both sides of the Atlantic. Another was the name of the National Reconnaissance Office which has run America's spy satellite program for a quarter of a century. He is forced to continually use the wordy euphemism "the Defense organizations responsible for overhead reconnaissance," despite the fact that the name was previously cleared by the CIA for former director William Colby's book *Honorable Men*.

IN SPITE OF the CIA's literary butchers, Admiral Turner succeeds in producing an important book on a dark subject. He paints a frightening picture of an agency almost beyond his control as a result of an entrenched, paranoiac old-boy-network. The three major operational branches functioned as independent fiefdoms, jealously guarding their borders from any outside interference—including that from the director. Frank Carlucci, appointed as Turner's deputy, compared the director's office with the control room of a power plant —except that all the switches were disconnected.

On October 31, 1977 open warfare broke out between Turner and his agency when dismissal notices were sent out to a number of agency employes as a result of post-Vietnam war personnel reductions. Taking the brunt of the losses on what became known as "The Halloween Massacre" was the branch responsible for human espionage collection (known as DDO, for Deputy Director of

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Operations). According to Turner, only 17 people from the espionage branch were actually fired and 147 were forced into early retirement. Through normal attrition over the next two years, however, the branch would be reduced by 820 positions.

Despite the facts, Turner says the press and public were deliberately misled by current and former agency employes into believing that he was actually firing 820 people. "What was really behind the outcries," writes Turner, "was outrage at my challenging the traditional independence of the espionage branch. If I could summarily reduce the size of the espionage branch, I might next begin to supervise what it did. The cry was over power and turf."

It was also a battle between the old covert-action diehards, many of whom were in retirement, and modern technical collection —and Turner was fully on the side of the technospy. "Their empire," says Turner speaking of the covert-action spooks, "which was surrounded by a moat of secrecy, had been invaded by an outsider who they believed would never understand or appreciate it and therefore could not properly change its ways." The former director is especially critical of the retired CIA community. He accused them of using "their training in manipulating people" to influence the "malleable" press in order to prevent any change at the agency.

Turner concludes with an "agenda for action" which includes such items as creation of an intelligence czar known as the Director of National Intelligence who would be separate from, but have authority over, the CIA and all the other resources. Another agenda item would strengthen the DCI's authority over the National Security Agency which, Turner says, frequently withholds information from the rest of the intelligence community in order to give it directly to the president or the National Security Council. "Scooping the rest of the Community is the game," says Turner, "the NSA plays it well and the overall intelligence effort suffers."

Finally Turner makes the most radical—and progressive —proposal of any former CIA director: the creation of a new organization to make available to any country the results of America's reconnaissance satellites. Known as the Open Skies Agency, the organization would help lessen the danger of unwanted wars brought on by misunderstanding and miscalculation by detecting and publicizing such things as buildups of conventional military power, border violations, early warning and nuclear proliferation activities. In the nonmilitary area, the agency would be able to help forecast world food supplies and thus anticipate famines, provide information on soil content and snow layers to warn of floods, and many other uses.

Such an idea is not unique. President Eisenhower first proposed an open skies concept in 1955 and in 1978 France called for the United Nations to operate a similar International Satellite Management Agency. This was rejected by DCI Turner at the time but he now calls that decision a mistake. Nor is Admiral Turner alone in this concern for such an agency. Arthur C. Lundahl, probably the foremost expert in the field and the founder of the National Photographic Interpretation Center which processes nearly all overhead spy photos, has advocated a similar organization, as have others.

Secrecy and Democracy is a frank, insightful examination of the business of espionage. One can only wonder how much more frank or insightful it might have been before it was "sanitized" by Mr. William Casey and his scissor-happy censors. ■

James Bamford is the author of "The Puzzle Palace," a book about the National Security Agency.